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Farm Broadcasters Letter



United States Department of Agriculture

Office of Communications

Washington, DC 20250-1340

Letter No. 2666

June 10, 1994

FARM INCOME -- As crop and livestock production increases, gross farm income is forecast to rise this year. Anticipated higher prices are the likely incentive for increasing acreage planted to cotton and rice. All major crops except wheat are expected to have larger acreages. Net cash income from farming is forecast to be similar to the annual average of \$57 billion during the past five years. Income of farm operator households are expected to increase. **Contact: Bob McElroy (202) 219-0800.**

FARM EXPENSES -- Interest expenses will rise this year as interest rates climb from their low levels in 1993. Rising petroleum prices will likely increase expenditures for petroleum-based farm inputs. Increases in planted acres will boost purchases of inputs associated with crop production. Most farm input items are expected to show increases this year. **Contact: Norm Bennett (202) 690-3229.**

SCHOOL MEAL STANDARDS -- USDA is proposing that by the 1998 school meals meet the recommendations of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. The proposal includes replacing the rigid "meal pattern" with a more flexible system, increasing customer appeal through nutrition education for students, training for school food service professionals, getting the best value for the nutrition dollar, and streamlining program administration. **Contact: Neal Flieger (703) 305-2039.**

SAFE SOYBEAN -- A genetically engineered soybean line has completed field trials and has passed tests for plant pest risk. USDA says the glyphosate-tolerant soybean does not present a plant pest risk, and therefore will no longer be regulated. The soybean has been modified to tolerate the herbicide glyphosate. National Environmental Policy Act regulations and guidelines were used to assess potential environmental impact. **Contact: Cynthia Eck (301) 436-5931.**

EGG PRODUCTION -- Total egg production this year is expected to be a record, about 6 billion dozen, up one percent from 1993. Wholesale and retail prices are expected to average lower than a year-earlier. Producer returns during 1994 will be much lower, averaging 2-3 cents per dozen. U.S. egg and egg product exports are expected to rise slightly to 160 million dozen. With Mexico's import restrictions eased, U.S. egg product exports to Mexico are growing. **Contact: Lee Christensen (202) 219-0714.**

COTTON IMPORTS -- The U.S. has boosted by 404 million pounds the amount of cotton to be imported. The additional amount is called for under the Agricultural Act of 1949 that requires the U.S. Department of Agriculture to observe cotton prices and allow imports when U.S. prices remain above certain levels. The allowed imported amount is equal to 21 days of domestic mill consumption, and is in addition to the 20 million pound import quota in effect. **Contact: Robert Feist (202) 720-6789.**

INTERNATIONAL ISSUES -- Secretary of Agriculture Mike Espy attended the 1994 Bilderberg Conference in Helsinki, Finland, June 3-4. The meeting brought together leading Europeans and Americans to consider issues affecting the Atlantic community. Topics included GATT, Russia, and the Atlantic communities in a time of change. Contact: Steve Kinsella (202) 720-4623.

WHITEFLIES -- The whitefly, a pest that has afflicted American agriculture since 1986, is apparently dispersing in other parts of the world. It is found in Asia and has been located for the first time in Spain, Egypt, Cyprus, and Pakistan. The pest transmits plant diseases, feeds on crops, and contaminates them with sticky sugars. Annual income loss is estimated at \$200 million on crops in Arizona, California, Florida, and Texas. Research may produce some relief. The sticky sugars deposited on cotton causes ginning and textile machinery to become clogged. USDA scientists have reduced stickiness by 82 percent by spraying before harvest a mix of enzymes. Researchers have found that an electrostatic spray charging system designed for aircraft places more insecticide on the lower surfaces where whiteflies gather reducing the pest's population. Contact: Robert Faust (301) 504-6918.

CHANGES IN WHAT WE'RE EATING -- Overall, Americans are eating fewer animal products and more crop products. Consumption of grains, fruits, and vegetables has been increasing steadily, while consumption of whole milk, eggs, and red meat has been declining. The consumption of dark green vegetables has increased by 30 percent. The USDA study compared information from the Nationwide Food Consumption Surveys of 1977-78 and 1987-88. The highest income households had the biggest decrease in red meat consumption, 31 percent. Lowest income households decreased their consumption of breakfast cereals by 9 percent, making them the lowest per person consumers of breakfast cereals. Contact: Joan Courtless (301) 436-8461.

FIT WITH LESS FAT -- Learning to decrease fat in foods may be the most important diet change a person can make. Decreasing fat intake helps treat heart disease, diabetes, hypertension, and obesity. Exercise is important to all age groups, but especially to older people. People who exercise build muscle strength, improve their balance and are less likely to fall and hurt themselves. Contact: Dan Rahn (912) 681-5189.

A MORE HEALTHY MOZZARELLA -- A new mozzarella cheese has been produced that has half the fat and salt of the commercially available cheeses. The all-natural mozzarella is superior in flavor, melting qualities and texture compared to commercial products. Only 30 percent of the calories come from fat, compared to 57 percent for reduced-fat products made with part skim milk. The cheese bakes, tastes and feels like the full-fat product. USDA's Food and Nutrition Service is evaluating the new product in Philadelphia public schools as part of USDA's effort to provide school children nutritious, good-tasting meals with less fat, salt and calories. Contact: Edyth Malin (215) 233-6444.

BLOCKING OUT UV -- Ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the sun can cause premature aging of the skin and has a role in skin cancer. A ceramics-blended polymer fiber is being added to polyester fiber to block UV radiation. It creates a new breed of synthetic sun-protective fabrics that may eventually offer new choices for outdoor wear. Currently available are tightly woven nylon fabrics that can block over 90 percent of UV rays. Contact: Charlotte Coffman (607) 255-2009.

FROM OUR RADIO SERVICE

AGRICULTURE USA #1931 -- Brenda Curtis discusses with an expert turkey products and preparation. (Weekly reel -- 13-1/2 minute documentary.)

CONSUMER TIME #1412 -- School lunches go on a diet; fields of green; pollution free lawn mowing; beneficial bugs; new test to measure zinc and copper. (Weekly reel of 2-1/2 to 3 minute consumer features.)

AGRITAPE FEATURES #1923 -- Farm income prospects; reinforcing rural health care issues; a new way of doing business for Russia; corn producers await ethanol announcement; attacking bovine tuberculosis. (Weekly reel of features.)

UPCOMING ON USDA RADIO NEWSLINE -- Friday, June 17, cattle on feed, agriculture outlook; Tuesday, June 21, weekly weather and crops, catfish processing, dairy outlook; Thursday, June 23, ag trade update. These are the USDA reports we know about in advance. Our Newsline carries many stories every day which are not listed in this lineup. Please don't let the lack of a story listing keep you from calling.

USDA RADIO NEWSLINE (202) 488-8358 or 8359
COMREX ENCODED (202) 720-2545
Material changed at 5 p.m., EDT, each working day.

FROM OUR TELEVISION SERVICE

FEATURES -- Patrick O'Leary reports on USDA's proposal to cut fat from the National School Meals Program and make other nutritional and administrative improvements. It's the most significant changes to the program since it was launched in 1946. 1:38.

ADDITIONAL SOUNDBITES -- At a news conference in USDA headquarters, June 8, agriculture secretary Mike Espy and USDA assistant secretary for Food & Consumer Service, Ellen Haas, speak about the new school meals initiative. 6 cuts, various lengths.

B-ROLL -- School lunch footage. 2:30.

FEATURE -- Eric Parsons reports on USDA's 1995 wheat support programs provisions, and the acreage reduction program (ARP) details. 1:30.

FEATURE -- Repeat of above feature without narration track. 1:30.

On satellite Galaxy 7, transponder 9, channel 9, audio 6.2 or 6.8, downlink frequency 3880 MHz.: Thursdays from 3:45 - 4:00 p.m., ET; Mondays 11:00 - 11:15 a.m., ET.

OFFMIKE

WORLD PORK EXPO...came to town, says **Jim Riggs** (WILO/WSHW, Frankfort, IN). Jim and crew provided extensive coverage for listeners. He serves the largest hog production area in the state. Jim says dryness has caused plants to exhibit dormant growth. Little rain is in the forecast.

COTTON ACREAGE...is larger in the state, says **Gene Ragan** (WTVY, Dothan, AL), and Georgia expects to produce one million more bales this year. A number of reasons are behind the increase, including good prices, the boll weevil eradication program, and producers diversifying their output beyond peanuts and cattle. Congratulations to Gene. His 70th birthday was recognized by the station's staff during his noontime program. Gene is in his 36th consecutive year of farm programming at the TV station, and his 41st year in farm radio.

UPDATE...on **Bob Middendorf**, formerly with CANN Network, Wisconsin. Bob remains in the media, moving to advertising sales for Country Today weekly newspaper in Eau Claire, WI.

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A FUND RAISING RALLY...was held in Bakersfield for an immigrant farmer from Taiwan, says **Roy Isom** (KMJ, Fresno, CA). The farmer is charged with killing an endangered species, either a kangaroo rat or a bluntnosed lizard, while plowing his field. His \$30,000 tractor was confiscated. He faces one-year in jail and a \$300,000 fine if convicted. Another area farmer had 160 acres of land taken and was fined for destroying endangered species habitat. Roy says the Endangered Species Act and its enforcement are hot issues in his region.

NEW VOICE...on the Linder Farm Network, Willmar, MN, is **Keith Lundberg** who has worked in radio and farm broadcasting in Iowa and Minnesota. He fills an opening left by **Shelly Beyer** who moved to the Minnesota Farm Bureau, in St. Paul, to serve as director of communications.

MAJOR EXPANSION...of business scope is underway, says **Orion Samuelson** (WGN, Tribune Radio Networks, Chicago). Tribune has agreed to acquire Farm Journal Inc., publisher of Farm Journal magazine. Orion says the cross pollination of coverage and combined resources will provide expanded reach for advertisers and service to producers.

VIC POWELL 
Office of Communications